

invited to and how none of them would have felt as much like an authentic reunion as being inside Earth Prime did at that moment.

A man roughly my own age walked in, flanked by several children. One of them, a young girl wearing a white-and-pink Spider-Gwen hoodie, had a list in hand. She bounced on the balls of her feet as she browsed from shelf to shelf, humming quietly.

I looked away, overcome by a rogue wave of emotion. I seemed to see a thread stretching back through time, connecting Bissette, Veitch and Farrell hunting the comics racks to misfits like Giordano and Simmon finding family at a fledgling shop. That thread reached all the way to the girl in the hoodie, humming to herself in her happy place. Earth Prime was hers now more than mine, and I loved that so much that I felt a strange, damp sensation at the corners of my eyes.

As I walked away from Earth Prime, I made a mental note to text my brother. I wanted to say something reflective of the strange epiphany I'd had standing in the shop. In the end, though, I decided to keep it simple.

"Dropped by Earth Prime," I texted Pat. "Still the same."

(At the request of Mr. SCHUMER, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

IRAN

• Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, yesterday, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing examining the current negotiations around restoring the JCPOA and our Nation's Iran policy. However, because I contracted COVID-19 and am following CDC guidance to isolate, I was not able to attend this important hearing. But I do want to state, for the record, that I believe preventing a nuclear-armed Iran through hard-nosed diplomacy is of the utmost importance to our Nation.

I am under no illusions that the deal currently being negotiated by the Biden administration would be perfect or that Iran is a good-faith negotiating partner. But when it comes to preventing a nuclear-armed Iran and creating a monitoring and verification regime that ensures Iran is sticking to its commitments, it is the only option.

Maximum pressure didn't work; more sanctions only led to Iran reconstituting its weapons program and growing its nuclear stockpile and more nefarious behavior in the region. A military response would be even worse; Iran would undoubtedly retaliate and be incentivized to ratchet up its nuclear program as it has done when its nuclear facilities and officials have been attacked in the past. Neither option achieves our goal of preventing a nuclear-armed Iran.

The only viable option is to continue negotiations on a nuclear deal. Doing so doesn't mean foregoing all of our other concerns with Iran. The U.S. never should and never will acquiesce in Iran's violations of international law and human rights and should continue to use all of our tools to combat its malign actions. But it would be a grave mistake to effectively green

light an Iranian bomb if we are unable to convince Iran's leadership to renounce all of Iran's other bad behavior as well.

A nuclear-armed Iran would be catastrophic for the region and the world by emboldening a belligerent nation, setting off an arms race, and undermining the broader nuclear order. I urge my colleagues to join me in giving the administration the space and flexibility it needs to restore a deal that prevents such an outcome.●

MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this coming Monday is Memorial Day, the day we set aside to honor the more than 1.1 million Americans who have given their lives in military service to our Nation.

It is a solemn day of remembrance and has a special resonance in my state. One of America's first Memorial Day ceremonies occurred in Illinois. It was April 1866—barely a year after the end of America's terrible Civil War.

Three returning veterans from that great conflict were waiting for services to begin at a church in Carbondale when they saw a young woman with two infants approach a small, unmarked grave in the church cemetery, place flowers on the grave, and kneel in prayer. The veterans, deeply moved, collected wildflowers and placed them at all of the veterans' graves in the churchyard. They then arranged to host a parade of veterans to honor the war dead resting in the town's cemetery.

More than 200 veterans showed up for that parade—one of America's first Memorial Day parades. Among the marchers was General John Logan, a Civil War hero and proud son of Illinois. The following year, General Logan was appointed the commander in chief of the Grand Army of the Republic. One of his first acts as commander in chief was to call for a national day of remembrance to honor the soldiers who sacrificed their lives so that America could receive a "new birth of freedom."

In the Army's General Order No. 11—the "Memorial Day Order"—General Logan wrote of his hope that the day of remembrance would be "kept up from year to year, [as long as] a survivor of the war remains to honor the memory of his departed comrades."

On this Memorial Day, more than a century and a half later, we remember all of the American patriots who have fallen in battles—from Antietam, to the Argonne Forest, to Afghanistan. General Logan called their deaths "the cost of a free and undivided republic."

In these fractious times, when our Nation sometimes feels, again, like a house divided, may we remember the price those fallen heroes paid to preserve our Union. And may we also remember the duty we each bear to preserve the priceless gift for which they gave their lives—this Nation, free and undivided.

On a related note, I want to take a moment to wish a belated happy birthday to an American hero who returned from war. Sgt. Victor Butler is that last surviving Tuskegee Airman in his home State of Rhode Island and one of the last of that legendary Band of Brothers in our Nation. Last Saturday, May 21, Mr. Butler celebrated his 100th birthday.

When he was a young man, he and the other members of the Tuskegee Airmen helped to save the world from the tyranny of fascism—and he helped to loosen the grip of racism on America. In the weeks before his 100th birthday, Mr. Butler told family and friends all he wanted for his centennial celebration was a card. He didn't want folks to make a fuss or go to any great expense.

One of his nieces posted his wish on social media—and word spread. He thought he might receive a few cards. At last count, Mr. Butler had received more than 40,000 cards and video greetings from people in every State in the Union and as far away as Japan, South Korea, and Germany.

Last Saturday, on his birthday, his hometown held a parade in his honor. And he received a signed football and a jersey with the number "100" on the back, hand-delivered by the owner of his favorite football team, the New England Patriots—a well-deserved tribute to a real-life hero.

Like the tradition of Memorial Day, the Tuskegee Airmen have a special connection to my State. The first airfield where they trained—before Tuskegee—was Chanute Field in Rantoul, IL, near Champaign. The spot where that airfield stood is marked proudly today with signs that read "Birthplace of the Tuskegee Airmen." And in 2016, Illinois renamed a stretch of Interstate 57 on the South Side of Chicago as the Tuskegee Airmen Memorial Trail. It is a fitting tribute, given how many Tuskegee Airman had roots in the Chicago area.

African-Americans have fought and died for America's freedom since Crispus Attucks became the first American to fall in our War for Independence.

As the first African-American aviators ever to serve in the U.S. Army Air Corps, the Tuskegee Airman occupy a special chapter in our Nation's history. They fought in World War II, at a time when the U.S. Armed Forces were still segregated, and our Nation was still riven with racially discriminatory laws and attitudes. Their original mission was to serve as escort pilots for other American flyers, to protect them from enemy fire. The Tuskegee Airmen also flew bombing missions themselves.

Officially, they were known as the 99th Pursuit Squadron and the 332nd Fighter Group. But the pilots whose flights they protected gave them a nickname. They called them the Red Tails, or the Red-Tailed Angels, due to the distinctive color on their aircraft

wings. Their leader was the legendary Captain Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., who would go on to become the first African-American brigadier general in the U.S. Air Force. His father, Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., was the first Black brigadier general in the U.S. Army.

There were a total of 932 Tuskegee Airmen pilots, and another 10,000 Tuskegee Airmen—and women—who served as mechanics, radio operators, and other essential support positions. They conducted more than 700 bomber escort missions—and they never lost a single lost a single aircraft—not one. They were the only fighter group in World War II with a perfect record of protecting bombers.

White U.S. military pilots were permitted to fly no more than 52 missions during World War II. Some Tuskegee Airman flew as many as 100 missions. Sixty-six Tuskegee Airmen died in combat. Thirty-three were held as prisoners of war.

In March 2007, the Tuskegee Airmen as a group were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor Congress can bestow. The ceremony was held in the Rotunda of the Capitol. I will never forget the sight of 300 Tuskegee Airman dressed in red sports jackets, saluting the American flag in that hallowed space. Some were in wheelchairs. But when the National Anthem played, they all rose to their feet and stood straight and proud.

Just before the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony, I had the privilege of hosting several Tuskegee Airmen with Illinois roots in my office. Then-Senator Obama stopped by to pay his respects. It was a historic and humbling moment.

I met Lt. Colonel George Sherman, who grew up in Moline and joined the Army Air Corps in 1944 at the age of 18. He had to take the physical twice; he was rejected the first time because of his buck teeth, but he didn't give up. He ended up serving 22 years in the Air Force.

First Lieutenant Shelby Westbook was born in Arkansas and lost both of his parents when he was just 12. He flew 60 missions over 12 countries in Europe. After the war, he wanted to attend engineering school. The first school he applied to rejected him because it didn't accept Black students. He moved to Chicago, earned a degree, and worked as an electrical engineer for decades.

First Lieutenant Robert Martin famously claimed to have flown "63 and a half missions." On his 64th combat mission, he was shot down over Yugoslavia. He was hidden by antifascist partisans until he could return to his unit. After the war, he worked as an electrical engineer for the city of Chicago for nearly 40 years.

Flight Officer John Lyle—"Captain Jack"—to his friends—grew up on Chicago's South Side. He flew 26 combat missions. After the war, he earned a college degree but couldn't find work in his field so, for a time, he washed

windows of downtown skyscrapers. Eventually, he owned his own insurance agency, a fish and chicken restaurant, and a tree-trimming service.

Lt. Bev Dunjill flew more than 100 combat missions between World War II and the Korean war. He later worked for the Illinois Department of Human Rights.

All of those heroes are gone now. But their valor and impact are not forgotten. The Tuskegee Airmen and the all-Black Montfort Point Marines were among nearly 1 million Black Americans who served in World War II. Most saw the war as a battle on two fronts—one against fascism overseas and the other against racially discriminatory laws and attitudes in America.

Their goal, they said, was "the Double V," victory for democracy overseas and at home. The change at home did not come easily, but it did come. Three years after World War II ended, President Truman ordered an end to segregation in the U.S. Armed Forces. And the service and sacrifice of the Tuskegee Airmen and other Black veterans and leaders helped set the stage for the civil rights movement of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s.

Today, as the last surviving Tuskegee Airman near their 100th birthdays and we lose hundreds of World War II veterans each day, we are painfully aware that the democracy and unity they paid such a high price for is under threat, both overseas and at home. The peace of Europe and democracy itself is under fire from Russia in Ukraine. And our sense of security and national unity seems to be fraying at home. Violence—especially gun violence—threatens us all, even our children.

Our progress against division and discrimination often feels shaky. We are pitted against each other by those who believe that conflict and anger is good for their political interests or their profit sheets. But it doesn't have to be this way.

As we prepare to remember and honor those who gave their lives for our freedom, let us resolve to do our part, in our time, to keep our Nation free and undivided.

NOTICE OF A TIE VOTE UNDER S. RES. 27

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to print the following letter in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, DC.

To the Secretary of the Senate:

PN1670, the nomination of Nancy G. Abudu, of Georgia, to be United States Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit, having been referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, the Committee, with a quorum present, has voted on the nomination as follows—

(1) on the question of reporting the nomination favorably with the recommendation

that the nomination be confirmed, 11 ayes to 11 noes; and

In accordance with section 3, paragraph (1)(A) of S. Res. 27 of the 117th Congress, I hereby give notice that the Committee has not reported the nomination because of a tie vote, and ask that this notice be printed in the Record pursuant to the resolution.

HONORING TED BENDA

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, last April, I came to the floor to honor fallen Iowa State Patrol Sergeant Jim Smith, who was murdered trying to apprehend a violent criminal. Last week, justice was served. His killer was convicted. I thank everyone who worked on this case.

Today, after the completion of National Police Week, it is with a heavy heart that I recognize another Iowa State Patrol officer killed in the line of duty last year in a tragic car accident. State Patrol Trooper Ted Benda was a dedicated servant of the people of Iowa for 16 years.

He began his career in Marquette and later moved to the Iowa State Patrol to serve the communities of Mason City and Oelwein. Trooper Benda was beloved by his colleagues who described him as dedicated. He "fully embraced the call to protect the community."

He put his family first, always lent a hand to friends and neighbors and cherished both his country and his community. Even in death, his service continued. As an organ donor, Trooper Benda continued to save lives. Trooper Benda: We thank you.

Trooper Benda left behind a loving family including his wife, Holly, and his four young daughters: Madilyn, Avery, Vivyan, and Sylvia.

Let me say to them: Your immeasurable sacrifice is honored by your community and your country. We thank you.

Losses like Trooper Benda's remind us of the great dangers that law enforcement officers and first responders face in service to our communities.

Last week, the Judiciary Committee held a Police Week markup. We passed several important measures through our committee that will help the police.

Soon, at my request, the Judiciary Committee will have a hearing on attacks on police. I have and will continue to lead efforts in the Senate to support law enforcement. After all that they have done to protect and serve us, it is the least I can do to protect and serve them.

NATIONAL FOSTER CARE MONTH

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, in 1988, President Ronald Reagan first recognized May as National Foster Care Month.

Each year since then, the month of May has been recognized as a time to bring awareness to youth in foster care.